

PAUL FILLA WRITTEN STATEMENT

Thank you Mrs. Chairwoman and Commissioners for allowing me the opportunity to share my perspective on communications impacts during Hurricane Ian.

You heard in my biography of an 18-site P25 radio system that I manage. Three of those sites lie on Sanibel and Pine Islands which no longer had roads to access. On a normal day, the system peaks at 25% performance for the 22 talk paths with zero busies. On Sept 29-30, there were several thousand busies. Many factors play into this - atypical users and uses, failure to manage distinct talkgroups, and ultimately my lack of planning to monitor performance and mitigate busies. While not optimally for the reasons I mention, the radio system operated; some sites not in wide area; some required finessing by the local Motorola shop and the Motorola Emergency Response Team but first responders maintained radio communications.

The introduction also included my responsibility to manage a geo-diverse 911 system. You may have heard reports that Lee County 911 experienced an outage. I can say unequivocally that Lee County 911 system did not go down and zero calls were routed to other Counties. In fact, 10 additional trunks were turned up to offer more inbound 911 capacity and the cache of deployed CommandPost laptops provided more calltaker positions. The Lee County Sheriff's Office and Sanibel Police Department relocated days before the storm - as designed - to perform calltaking operations in our bunker. In the days leading up to the storm, the County PSAPs average 3,400 daily calls, from Sept 28 to Oct 1 the PSAPs averaged 12,000 daily calls - 3 to 4 fold increase. Our County's Public Safety network engineer for 911, JC Meyer and his team, executed a well-designed plan and the system he architected ensured performance, redundancy and scalability in so many ways. Did we answer every 911 call, only the local exchange carrier has that information but know that all calls that entered the 911 system were routed internally and answered by Lee County calltakers.

My introduction did not mention the 'other duties as assigned' that Ian presented. One of those duties was coordinating the communications needs of strike teams supporting the rescue and response efforts in Lee County. The State Emergency Support Function 2 (ESF-2) dispatched resources and a team to Lee County led locally by Sgt. Jason Matthews from Lake County Sheriff's Office. This teams' experience in previous storm response and their coordination with EMCI our local vendor for radio purchases and programming allowed us to leverage the LMR infrastructure - conventional and simulcast - to support these inbound teams. My dependence on ESF-2 during these days and weeks was invaluable.

The second duty and I believe the focus of this panel is the coordination of the restoration efforts of the cellular services. First responders like our citizens have an appetite for cellular services. Like my radio towers, the carriers' systems took hits from Ian. Lee County first response agencies primarily operate on Verizon priority and pre-emption services and the responders coming into Lee County when not on Verizon were often operating on FirstNet. I was able to establish contacts with these carriers early in the process to get regular updates of their restoration efforts - some with greater transparency and presence at our EOC than others - but ultimately my goal was to make sure if there is something needed from Lee County to assist in the carriers' restoration efforts that I pointed them in the right direction. The carriers, power companies, local broadband suppliers providing backhaul, County administration, local municipalities, and the Lee County Sheriff's office as well as the respective representatives at the State EOC were resources that were essential to these efforts.

Thank you.